34: Del Re--33-34 U-4 (no date) No Date Formosan Aborigines
116, 784, 562, 823, 226, 793 Yami

"So great is the importance attributed to the visit of the flying fish, that during this period fishermen are required to observe a large number of prescriptive taboos, as well as others connected with the numerous rituals observed during the actual ceremonies. These are summed up in the following commandments:---'When you go fishing, do not look down into the water.' 'Do not spit into the sea; spit into the air so that your spittle may fall upon the sea like rain.' 'Do not cast stones into the sea' ---and many others of a like nature. Another important taboo connected with the sea and most stringently enforced at this time, is that no woman shall touch or have anything to do with the flying-fish ceremony, or approach close to, much less enter, the sea. It would appear that this is related to the early creation myth in which a pregnant woman by enter-[34]ing the sea was the cause of the great flood which covered the island and destroyed all life upon it. (11)"

11. See Legand of Imulud, AYL, p. 92 lines 1 ff.

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the other gods; both he and other informants failed to indicate any practice of sun-worship[3]. The second type of *kawas* are ancestral gods, called *tatakusan*. The Tavarong Ami worship their ancestors, especially the first ancestors *lotʃi* and *rarakan*; these latter live among the Ami, although they are invisible. *ʃikawasai* (shamans) have their special gods[4]. It is clear, therefore, that the Ami have a well-developed theogony, a trait not found among the other aboriginal tribes of Formosa[5].

One who dies an unnatural death will become a *karia* or evil spirit. A person can contract an illness on encountering a *karia*.

Each individual possesses a soul, called *doŋɛ*.[6] If one's *doŋɛ* weakens, one will become sick; and if one's *doŋ* should escape from the body, one will die. In this connection, Furuno (1942: 19–23) reported that among the Ami, each human being has two souls, one on the left and one on the right shoulder. The one on the right shoulder is the good soul, and the one on the left the bad. The *karia*, or evil spirits, are the souls on the left shoulders of those who died an unnatural death.[7]

Shamanism

Religious activities are carried out by *ʃikawasai*, or shamans, and *kakita:n*, or priests. The functions of both are well-defined. A *ʃikawasai* is consulted mainly to strengthen or call back the *doŋɛ* of a sick person. In this sense, the *ʃikawasai* may be defined as medicine-men. The *kakita:n* manage the Ami religious ceremonies, most of which are agricultural in nature. A *ʃikawasai* is believed to have been chosen by a dead *ʃikawasai* or by the *ʃikawasai* gods. When a young boy or girl contracts a chronic illness, he (or she) is regarded as having been chosen, and it is believed that that individual be cured by becoming a *ʃikawasai*. This child will then be taught the techniques by an older *ʃikawasai*. In the first year of his apprenticeship, until the next *irisiŋ* (the Ami New Year), a taboo on the eating of fish and vegetables must be observed. He is also required to pursue hard labor and to abstain from washing the body. A primary qualification for a *ʃikawasai* is the ability to achieve a state of delirium.

There are today approximately ten *ʃikawasai* in Tavarong, seven men and three women. Oikawa's contention that there are more female than male *ʃikawasai*

3. Furuno [1945:20] recorded the following belief from the Hsiu-ku-luan Ami: "*tʃidar*" the sun, gave life to human beings, animals, and plants. We think that she is a *kawas*, too. Rituals cannot be carried on without *tʃidar*. The *kakita:n* call on *tʃidar* in the *irisiŋ*. At harvest time, we gave thanks to this goddess."
4. Sayama [1914] listed the names of two *ʃikawasai* gods, *saoriŋa* and *sararazoi*.
5. Mabuchi [1934-35] discusses this theogony.
6. Furuno [1940:19-21] and Mabuchi [1934-35] recorded the *doŋɛ* as a goddess.
7. This belief is found among other Formosan tribes. For a Bunun example, see Mabuchi [1951:56].

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The other part of the *mi?ʃao* divinatory instrument is called *tsohak*. This is a piece of hardwood about 18cm in length. It is held under one foot of the diviner when in use. The end held under the foot is often somewhat thinner than the other end. The other end is about 4cm thick and has two or three grooves transversely carved on one side. These grooves are called *ŋakto*.

During divination, the *tsohak* is placed on the ground with the grooved side facing downward. The end without grooves is held under one foot of the diviner. The central portion of the inner face of the *ʃao* is breathed upon and smeared with ashes before it is used. Then, with the end with the mane-like fibres in his left hand, and with the end with the bamboo-joint in his right hand, the diviner saws the *ʃao* in the *ŋakto* of the *tsohak*. The *ʃao* will be severed by this heavy sawing, and the result of the divination can be read from the shape of the severed end of the part without the bamboo-joint, with the bamboo exterior facing the diviner.

By comparative study, Utsurikawa found that *mi?ʃao* divination has affinities in southeast Asia, particularly with the Kenyah and the Kayan of Borneo and with the Nagas of Assam. He therefore considered this technique as an Indonesian culture trait.

Priesthood

Among the Tavarong Ami, priests were called *kakita:n*. The office of *kakita:n* was hereditary: succession was by primogeniture through the female line. Formerly there were five or six *kakita:n* families in Tavarong, but only one, that of the late Saumah-Kuriu, remains in existence today, and will be described later. The cause of the decrease in *kikita:n* families was, according to one informant, due to the prohibition placed on native rituals by the Japanese authorities. The priestly families consequently declined because they had lost their function. The Saumah-Kuriu family retained its standing as it owned a ceremonial house with carved wooden posts; this house was designated an historical monument in 1935 by the Japanese colonial administration.

This same ceremonial house was reported by Utsurikawa (1936) and Tsijiiwa (1944). The present house keeps its original form today although it has been rebuilt in recent years and now is only one half the size of the original house described by the above two authors. Its present plan and a side-view are shown in the accompanying illustration (Figure 1). According to Utsurikawa, the original house was abandoned in May 1930 on the death of the family head Saumah-Kuriu, a decision reached at that time by the family members on account of frequent misfortune. The house itself is unique: it is the only one in the entire Ami area having carved wooden posts. The designs on these posts are human and animal figures, curved lines, and sawtooth patterns. The geometrical designs are always symmetrical in arrangement. In the changing culture of the Ami, a new type of house has been adopted by the tribesmen. This ceremonial house remains as the only surviving example of their original type of dwelling.

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On the sixth day, all grade members gathered once more in front of the *kakita:n* house. At this time, all the *šikawasai* (shamans) of the town came to the house and performed rites to ward off disease from the attending celebrants. Then, the *šikawasai* danced together, while the others went out to their own fields to perform a ceremony of mimical cultivation to guarantee a good harvest in the year to come.

The final day of the *irisiŋ*, all the inhabitants of Tavarong went to fish in the streams and rivers. Each individual offered one fish to the gods to inform them that the New Year had commenced. After the celebrants returned to the town, the fish were offered to the *tatakusan*, the ancestral gods; the offering was then divided up among the populace and eaten, thus breaking the taboo on fish and vegetables. This concluded the *irisiŋ*.

Conclusions

In our examination of Ami religion, we found that at least in part Ami society can be considered as a theocracy. The *kakita:n*, the hereditary priests, combined in their persons both temporal and spiritual power. The priestly house served as the ceremonial and political center of the tribesmen and may bear some theoretical importance as a possible prototype of the village-temple.

Shamans and priests are clearly distinguished among the Ami. The former succeeded by reincarnation, and the latter through inheritance. Ami shamanism [this was still true in 1953] in typically Asiatic, in that its practitioners are emotionally unstable individuals who derive their power from direct contact with the spiritual world; this contact is made at times of the greatest physical strain [chronic illness]. Ami shamanism is also of a non-Arctic type, since the neophyte is indoctrinated with the shamanistic techniques, instead of receiving them through spiritual experiences of a personal, charismatic nature. The shamans practice a complex and typically Indonesian type of divination.

As with many other peoples of the Indonesian culture area, no sharp distinction is made by the Ami between gods, spirits, and souls, which are all designated by the generic term *kawas*. However, the Ami are atypical among the Formosan tribes in that they possess a relatively highly developed genealogical mythology or theogony. The possible relation between this theogony and Ami social structure is worthy of future study. It may be of significance, for instance, that in this matrilineal society the sun is a female goddess, and the moon male. This spiritual world provides the power and justification for all Ami religious activities, being beseeched with prayers and bribed with offerings.

The *irisiŋ*, the great New Year ceremony which was described in detail, is functionally a world renewal ritual, the renewal of the powers of the stream and soil and, in fact, a renewal of the whole society. In this, the population was

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776
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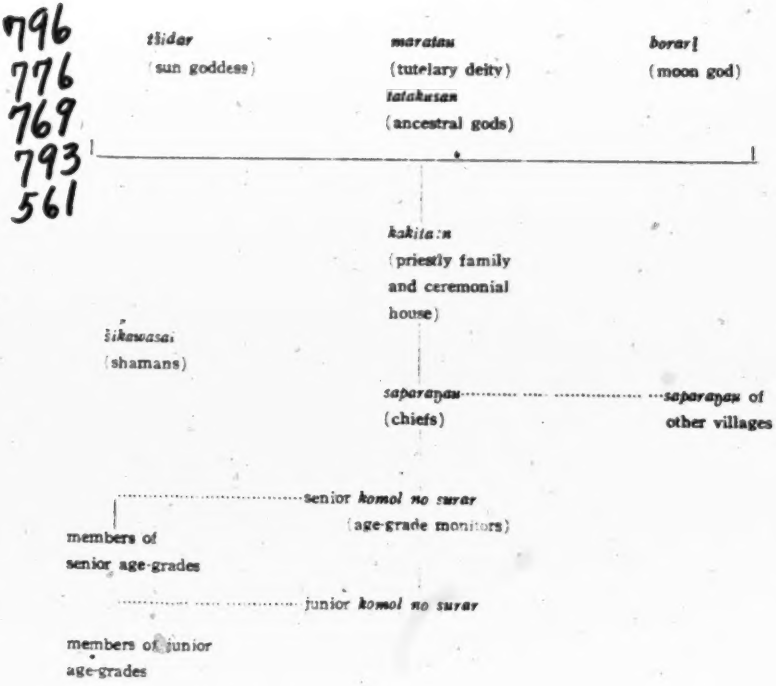

Figure 2: the Ami hierarchy at *irisiŋ*

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purified through fasting, symbolical washing of hands, and shamanistic expulsion of disease. The structure of the Ami universe is at this time stated as a hierarchy in which each rank of seniority hands down precepts to be obeyed by the next lower rank [see Figure 2]. At the top level, for among the Ami the spiritual world is continuous with the material, are the sun goddess, the moon god, and *maralau*, the tutelary deity who instructed men in the order of things on earth. With them are the *tatakusan*, the ancestral gods who are to be respected as elders and whose way of life is to be followed. Under these were the *kakita:n*, the priestly families who carried out the will of the gods in this world. The rest of the Ami were arranged by seniority into a system of age-grades, each with its chosen monitor, and each harkening to the instructions passed down from the next senior age-grade. Acting as intermediaries between the priests and the laity were the *saparaŋau*, leaders of proven ability selected from the ranks of the elder grades. This structure was annually affirmed symbolically in the *irisiŋ*, and it clear that it was basically gerontocratic in nature, in that the real power was in the hands of old men.

All this is of course now passing away, and element after element of the old Ami way of life is either disappearing or being reinterpreted to meet new conditions. In the realm of social organization, for instance, there is a definite drift in Tavarong and other Ami areas towards patrilineal descent and neolocality, a change fostered by Japanese and Chinese pressure. Ami religion is fast changing, and the *kakita:n* house itself is an unused, half-forgotten relic of interest primarily only to ethnographers. Shamanism for some as yet unexplaind reason has persisted; this is a field for further study.

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